

REMARKS

Claims 17-32 and 34-43 are pending in the application. Claims 34-43 are allowed. Via this amendment, Claims 17, 29 and 31 are amended.

Claim Rejections -35 USC §103

Claims 17-32 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nachtman, *et al.* (US 5,897,946) (hereinafter "Nachtman").

Claims 17, 29 and 31 are amended herein to recite that the method of the present invention is carried out in direct reduction furnaces. Support for this amendment is found throughout the specification. For example, at page 2, lines 6-8, "Thus, the stability of the coating film can be attained, even when submitted to handling and transporting operations of the coated materials, what can reduce the formation of agglomerates in direct reduction reactors;" At page 2, lines 23-26, "By reducing the formation of agglomerates inside the furnaces, a more efficient operation of the direct reduction furnace is assured, besides allowing the operation at more elevated temperatures, thus allowing a greater outflow of material the result of which is higher productivity of the furnace." And at page 2, lines 27-29, "It should be emphasized here that the iron-containing reducible material used in the present invention can be in any form that makes it possible to process same in a direct reduction furnace;" No new matter is added via this amendment.

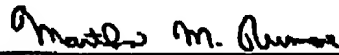
Inasmuch as the Examiner has stated as rationale for allowing Claims 34-43, that "none of the cited or prior art shows or fairly suggests a method of operating a direct reduction furnace

with the recited coated material," Claims 17-32, as currently amended, cannot be obvious over the Nachtman reference.

In view of the foregoing discussion and amendment, it is respectfully submitted that the present invention as defined in the pending claims is in full compliance with all the statutory requirements, and therefore, it is earnestly requested that the Examiner's rejections be withdrawn and the pending claims be allowed in their present form.

Any fee due with this paper may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-1290.

Respectfully submitted,



Martha M. Rumore
Reg. No. 47,046

CUSTOMER NUMBER 026304
Telephone: (212) 940-6566
Fax: (212) 894-5606
Docket No.: MITA 17.869 (100697-09944)
MMR:fd